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THE HIGHER DEGREES IN GERMANY

THEIR POLITY AND ORGANIZATION

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HERE has been a general feeling among Freemasons that in some way the order would at some time have more or less influence in bringing about peace. It was this feeling that prompted the writer to begin an investigation along this line as to what organizations among the Masons in Germany would possibly be able to have influence in this direction. But it was not until the editor of THE NEW AGE had mentioned the lack of general knowledge which existed in the United States as to the polity and form of organization of the higher degrees as they exist today in Germany, and suggested that an article along this line would be very acceptable to the readers of the magazine, that a serious effort was made to obtain the desired information.

Let me say that the research work involved has been of the greatest value to the one performing it, the more so as it has been necessary to go into the whole question of the organization and modification of the order, not only in Germany, but also in England and Sweden. The foundations on which it rests have also been examined.

It was the Scotch Presbyterian minister, Rev. Dr. James Anderson, one who helped to organize the first Grand Lodge in London in 1717, whose report on the Ancient Constitutions of the previously

existing lodges was adopted as the famous "Book of the Constitutions" in 1723, and this has formed the constitution and basic organic law of real Masonry ever since. In the "Charges of a Freemason" in that document—which now lies before me—under the first of "The General Heads," viz: "Of God and Religion," it says:

1. Concerning God and Religion. A Mason is obliged by his Tenure to obey the Moral Law; and if he rightly understands the Art, he will never be a stupid *Atheist* nor an irreligious *Libertine*. But though in ancient times Masons were charg'd in every country to be of the religion of that country or nation, whatever it was, yet 'tis now thought more expedient only to oblige them to that Religion in which all men agree, leaving their particular opinions to themselves: that is to be *good men and true*, or Men of Honour and Honesty by whatever Denomination or Persuasion they may be distinguished; whereby Masonry becomes the *Center of Union* and the means of conciliating true Friendship among Persons that must have remained at a perpetual distance.

This was considered, by Robert Freke Gould, as involving the most important change made by the Constitution, as it took away the Christian and sectarian character which had been given it in accordance with the opportunism of the second sentence and made it frankly and openly tolerant of every religion.

As Brother Th. G. Valette, editor of the *Union Fraternelle* of the Orient of the Hague, truly says, "It was thus in

the eighteenth century that Freemasonry began the practice of tolerance, the most difficult of all the arts. The first Grand Lodge had an immense success because it started out with the principle that 'no man and no corporation has the right to declare his personal interpretation of the truth to be compulsory for others.'

This toleration admitted men of every religion: the Mohammedan, the Christian, Jew, Brahman, Buddhist, and Parsee, as so well told by Rudyard Kipling in his poem, "My Lodge," which every Mason should read, and which came to my mind recently when attending one of those isolated consistories which compel a man to take the Christian degrees of Knight Templarism before he can join the Scottish Rite which alone is like the Blue Lodge in that it admits men of every religion. It is this universality of Masonry and its tolerance that stands out in the original Grand Lodge of 1717 and makes such contrast with the Freemasonry of Germany as it exists today, narrow, aristocratic and Christian. This is why the "Ancient Charges" are quoted *in extenso* to show the exact wording, and how far Masonry in Germany has departed from the original. This is said with no feeling of bitterness, as the writer had approached the subject with a certain degree of predisposition in favor of German Masonry—which has been entirely wiped out by the facts, for it can be said again and again, "There is no Religion higher than Truth."

In getting at the facts it has been necessary to go through a number of German histories—of which there are many—and it is curious to see in all of them how little Germans are disposed to forgive England for being the birthplace of modern Freemasonry. Carping criticism, innuendoes, belittling statements, rank disbelief of historical documents in England—all characterize the German historians, together with a disposition to exalt the German Steinmetzen, or Masons, of Strassburg because they were German. Begemann, Kloss, Krause, Findel, Nicolai, Schottmuller, Cramer, Katsch, Keller—all

seem to be imbued with the idea that because it did not happen in Germany, it therefore did not amount to so very much, and at any rate it did not go back to the Constitutions of York, even although the Masons of that day said that it did.

The most impartial source of information as to the constitution of Masonry in Germany today is to be found in the publications of the International Bureau for Masonic Affairs, located at Neuchatel, Switzerland, and of which Ed. Quartier la Tente, formerly Grand Master of the Swiss Grand Lodge "Alpina," is the originator, head and moving spirit. It is too bad that this bureau is not better known and supported in the United States, as every Grand Lodge should be a member of it. In its bulletin for March, 1917, it says, "German Masonry has broken obstreperously with Italian, French and Swiss Masonries, and has suspended all relations with English Masonry."

A German Masonic newspaper contains the following: "In imitation of the three Prussian Grand Lodges which have broken their relations with the Swiss Grand Lodge, the Grand Lodge of Hungary, the Grand Lodge 'Zur Sonne' of Bayreuth, and the Independent Grand Lodges of Leipzig have done the same."

The bulletin asks, "What has the Swiss Grand Lodge done that such a movement should have been set on foot against it? It has continued to live in peace. It has taken no one's part. It has shown a perfect neutrality, declining every request compliance with which might injure its relations; and yet, for all that, it has incurred the excommunication of German Masonry. . . . If one admitted all that the German Masonic newspapers have published against the Masonries of other countries, it would be necessary to believe that there are no longer any groups worthy of the name of Masons except the Group of Germany."

It is necessary to quote at length from the pages of this recent bulletin from the neutral country of Switzerland in order to understand the arrogance and

self-conceit of German Masonry which would almost pass belief were it not that these same ideas of "*Deutschland ueber Alles*" have lain behind all their destructive criticism of years, and because it explains the form of government and polity of the higher degrees in Germany. Therefore we quote from the bulletin as follows:

The Masonry of Germany alone, writes a German newspaper, deserves esteem and respect; English Masonry is perhaps a grand charity institution, that of Latin countries is an instrument of politics and atheism; in Germany, Sweden, and Norway, Masonry is entirely free from politics, and concerns itself with social and moral problems.

Ideas, however, vary somewhat as to the international character of the association, the fundamental principle of which is that of fraternity.

The war, says a German writer, has taught us that the Masonry of our country must become exclusively national. It must wear a German dress, and have a German character. It must renounce every connection with the World's Masonry. The war, says another German journalist, has destroyed all idea of Masonic Internationalism. International Masonry has become bankrupt. This opinion is general in all German lodges. Masonic Cosmopolitanism is, therefore, a fiction. German Freemasonry, has no need of the "International," which has nothing to offer it. It cannot entertain relations with Grand Lodges that are only political instruments and which make use of Freemasonry for political plots.

Others have been still more violent: The so-called English Masonry, which made such a boisterous entrance into the world in 1717, notwithstanding its unimportance, was very different from what we German Masons represent to ourselves as models of virtue. It was a very narrow—and very English—organization which had absolutely no thought of a union of humanity, but which troubled itself only about England and sought only to favor the relations between Catholics and Protestants, between Scotch and English.

The great extension of the idea to the whole of mankind is the work of International "Deutschum;" it is only the German brain and the German heart that can carry the enterprise to a successful end, together with the current of the World's Union. Let us be frank; for us Germans, our ideal dream of internationalism has come to nought. Instead of being figurants we have become actors. In future we shall also continue to practice the model of Masonic virtues, but we shall not carry them out into the vast world.

Latin Masonry does not possess a single spark of the Masonic spirit. Our Masonic idea is truly German, or, in a wider sense, Germanic. English Masonry is nothing but

vanity and sport; in it there is no trace of our spiritual comprehension. In France Masonry works in politics to which it sacrifices the greater part of its activity. International Masonry is dead, and, notwithstanding all efforts to the contrary, will remain dead. Let us, therefore, be German Freemasons and work in our own way.

And lastly here is the conclusion arrived at by a brother: We German Freemasons will have nothing more to do with international relations, and, above all, we will have no official relations. Long live German Freemasonry! Down with international fanaticism! It has deceived the world long enough and now deserves to be struck down!

We could multiply such declarations, for they abound in the German Masonic newspapers.

This magazine concludes: "These affirmations, coming from the Masonry that calls itself the only one worthy to live, are a manifestation of pride which must not disturb us, any more than the insults which German Masonry pours forth on everything that is not Germanic."

It is necessary to reprint these quotations in order that American Masons may get some viewpoints concerning the condition of the German mind, drunk with egotism and arrogance, and a clear idea of the difficulties to be faced before peace, which will endure, can be attained. It must be admitted that the writer has reached this standpoint reluctantly after a careful study of the origin and feeling of German Freemasonry. Just a few more quotations. "Were the whole world to be in ruins, Germany must remain. It is of its will to conquer that is born the call which resounds today in the Masonic Temples of our country. International Freemasonry is dead—Long live German Freemasonry!" Another adds, "International Freemasonry has failed completely. This is the opinion of German Masonry, and it is fortunate that the war has separated German Masonry, the guardian of moral and religious culture, and Latin Masonry, which is atheistic and political." Its repetition of the old jesuitical lie against Latin Masonry we now recognize as being just as foundationless as its assertion that "Germany is the guardian of moral and religious culture." When we call to mind

the ravishers of Belgium, well may we exclaim, Heaven save the mark!

The *Freimaurer Zeitung*, of Leipzig, writes as follows: "We, the German Apostles of the Royal Art, are definitely face to face with the obligation to be henceforth what we already were as a matter of fact—the true heirs and representatives of Freemasonry. Moreover, it was only *cum grano salis* that we have been able hitherto to consider the Latins as Freemasons. Now for a pottage of lentils consisting of a momentary money market and promise of the world's trade, the English have thrown away their venerable rights to Masonic primogeniture. Just as the native country of Jesus is no longer Palestine (?), so the Royal Art is no longer English. Both have taken up their abodes in German hearts and German consciences." Pretty small quarters! Let us see how big these high-crowning lodges are.

The first German lodge was established at Hamburg on December 6, 1737. On August 14, 1738, this lodge initiated him who was afterwards Frederick the Great. Frederick organized in his castle a private lodge which became the starting point of Freemasonry in Prussia, as it was removed to Berlin in 1740, and from thence the first German Grand Lodge sprung.

There was a lodge which, according to *Light*, was known to meet at King's Chapel in Boston, Mass., U. S. A., in 1720; and there was an account in newspapers there of Masonic activities on May 25, 1727, ten years before there was a lodge in Germany, and the first warrant from England to Prov. G. M. Henry Price was dated July 30, 1733.

The National Mother Grand Lodge, "The Three Globes," at Berlin, now has 151 lodges and 17,400 members. The National Grand Lodge of German Masons at Berlin now has 147 lodges and 16,303 members. The Grand Lodge of Prussia, "Royal York of Friendship," at Berlin, has 81 lodges and 8,376 members. The Grand Lodge of Hamburg has 63 lodges and 5,560 members.

The National Grand Lodge of Saxony at Dresden has 38 lodges and 5,926

members. The Grand Lodge, "The Sun," at Bayreuth, has 38 lodges and 3,914 members. The Eclectic Grand Lodge at Frankfort on Main has 25 lodges and 3,786 members. The Grand Lodge, "Concordia," at Darmstadt, has 8 lodges and 725 members.

The five independent lodges of Germany are not under the obedience of any of the above Grand Lodges. They are: "Minerva of the Three Palms" of Leipsic, "Baldwin of the Linden" at Leipsic, "Archimedes of the Three Tracing Tables" at Altenburg, "Archimedes of the Eternal Union" at Gera, and "Charles of the Crown Rue;" and these five lodges have a total membership of 1,433, making a grand total of all Masons in Germany of 556 lodges and 63,423 members.

In Chicago alone there are 70,000 Masons, or 7,000 more than there are in the whole of Germany; while the State of Missouri has 62,000 members in 528 lodges; and there are over 2,000,000 Masons in the United States. While the same cannot be said of the Higher Degrees in Germany that was said of the snakes in Ireland ("There are no snakes in Ireland"), yet the facts are pretty much the same. In Frankfort one is obliged, when he takes his Blue Lodge Degrees, to take an obligation not to take any of the Higher Degrees. Five out of the eight Grand Lodges of Germany permit only the three symbolic degrees; these are: Hamburg, Saxony, Bayreuth, Frankfort, and Darmstadt. This leaves only the three Grand Lodges of Prussia who have concurrent jurisdiction in Berlin, to give the higher degrees, which are thus centered in Berlin, the capital of Prussia and militarism. There is no Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite in all Germany.

The National Grand Lodge of German Freemasons has 10 degrees; the Grand Lodge of the Three Globes has 7 degrees, and the Grand Lodge of the Royal York has 4 degrees. In the National Grand Lodge the first three degrees constitute the Lodge of St. John; the 4th and 5th, the Lodge of St. Andrew; the next four, 6th to 9th, inclusive, compose the Chapter. The 10th

degree is conferred only at Berlin. It is a kind of honorary degree which bears the name, "Apprentice of Perfection." Its distinctive badge is a red cross hung saltier-wise around the neck; and the titulants of the degree are called Knights of the Red Cross. A special interest is taken by the National Grand Lodge in the first five degrees, and it has at its head a Grand Master assisted by Grand Officers. The Chapter settles all questions concerning the degrees from the 6th to the 10th; and all matters that affect the system or the Rite are under its executive control. There are four kinds of Chapters: those that work the 6th and 7th degrees; those that work the 6th, 7th and 8th; those that work the 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th; and, lastly, the Grand Chapter Indissolubilis at Berlin. At the head of the whole system stands a Master of the Order. This was founded by Zinnendorf, a partisan of the "Strict Observance," and formerly Grand Master of the Three Globes, which station he left to found these lodges which are modeled after the Swedish Rite and are intensely Christian, not permitting any Jews or other religionists to take the degrees. It was in a lodge under this Grand Lodge that Emperor William I—then Prince William of Prussia—and his son, Emperor Frederick III, were interested.

The system of the National Grand Lodge, "The Three Globes," the first grand lodge, comprises seven degrees. The first three constitute the Lodge of St. John, the fourth is the Scottish General Lodge, and the next three form the Chapter or the Intimate Orient. The Grand Lodge of the Three Globes cannot have more than 63 members, all of whom must be chosen from among the members residing in Berlin or in its immediate neighborhood. Once a year, usually in May, all the Worshipful Masters of the dependent lodges are convened at Berlin for the sitting of the Grand Lodge. This is governed by a managing committee chosen from among the brethren who are invested with the 7th degree. It is to this managing committee that all questions of a ritualistic character are especially re-

ferred, and it is officially designated "Keeper, Reformer and Dispenser of 'The Masonic Science.'" All decisions taken on subjects connected therewith are subject to its veto.

The Grand Lodge, "Royal York," has three degrees, together with a fourth which exists in the Scottish Master (Privy Orient). This degree is practiced as a kind of Royal Arch, and it is the members invested with this degree who compose the Privy Orient of the Grand Lodge, which is entrusted with the examination of all questions concerning rites and dogmas. It took this name when organized in 1798 in consequence of the initiation of Edward Duke of York, brother of King George III. It is worthy of note that the German high degrees form an integral part of the Prussian Grand Lodge only, and Christians alone may aspire to these degrees.

Such is the polity and form of organization of the higher degrees in Germany. It is to be emphasized that only in Berlin are there any degrees higher than the first three, and these are under the influence and control of those Grand Lodges which are essentially royal, aristocratic, autocratic and military; whose whole history is bound up with the Prussian ruling and military classes. What chance can there be for peace under such circumstances? Is it any wonder that the utterances of German Freemasonry are arrogant, conceited and bombastic, lacking the true spirit of fraternity and universal brotherhood which characterizes Masonry in other lands?

Not until Germany has received a crushing defeat on the field of battle, such as Napoleon, himself a Mason, gave her in the beginning of the last century, and the consequent humbling of this arrogant, dictatorial spirit, can it be possible to have a true Masonry in Germany and in bringing together again of the Masons of the world in a world-wide, universal federation which will bring about universal and lasting peace. All the other Masonic bodies of the world must unite against Germany—or rather without her—in order to bring about this great event.